

PUBLIC INFORMATION STATEMENT
NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE RALEIGH NC
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WINTER WEATHER PREPAREDNESS WEEK IN NORTH CAROLINA
NOVEMBER 28 – DECEMBER 4, 2010

This week has been declared winter weather preparedness week in North Carolina. All week long the National Weather Service will be issuing informative messages to help you prepare for winter weather.

...OUTLOOK FOR THIS WINTER...

Last winter central North Carolina experienced an active winter with above normal snowfall and the most snow since the 2003-2004 winter season. Fortunately most of the winter storms struck late in the week and on weekends minimizing impacts on transportation...schools and businesses.

Looking ahead to this winter La Nina...defined by colder than normal sea surface temperatures in the Pacific Ocean...could bring an entirely different winter than that experienced last year. A La Nina episode generally results in a northward shift in the jet stream influencing the track of winter storm systems and allows warmer air to move further north. This in contrast to last season when the jet stream was positioned further south resulting in the development of numerous storms systems over the Gulf of Mexico which tracked northward to the mid Atlantic.

With all that in mind...a La Nina winter does not mean there will be no winter storms. The winter of 2000...also a La Nina winter... saw record snowfall of nearly 26 inches across the area. One storm alone brought over 20 inches of snow to central North Carolina on January 25, 2000 as a massive storm system rapidly intensified along the Carolina coast. The La Nina weather pattern with its northward shift in the jet stream can also make winter forecasting more difficult. This is due to the fact that a more northern jet stream position results in storm developing and intensifying over the mid Atlantic instead of becoming well developed before they impact the area. La Nina winters can also result in more wintry mixes and chances for more freezing rain and sleet due to the warmer temperatures.

Everyone should use this week to look ahead to the upcoming winter months and prepare for the possibility of winter storms. Below are some definitions of winter storm watches...warnings and advisories various winter precipitation types...as well as information on NWS winter storm warnings and advisories.

....WINTER TERMS....

.....Winter Storm Watches and Warnings.....

Watches and warnings are issued by the NWS for potentially life-threatening conditions. In winter, watches and warnings are issued for significant snow and/or ice storms. Below are a list of winter weather watches...warnings and advisories.

Winter Storm Watch - issued when the following weather conditions are possible within 24 to 48 hours - at least 3 inches of snow and/or ice accumulations of 1/4 inch or more...in a 12 to 24 hour period.

Winter Storm Warning - issued when at least 3 inches of snow or ice accumulations of 1/4 inch or more are likely within 24 hours.

Winter Weather Advisory - issued when 1 to 3 inches of snow or ice accumulations of less than 1/4 inch are likely within 24 hours.

Blizzard Warning - issued when strong winds combine with falling and/or blowing snow to reduce visibility to one quarter mile or less for at least 3 hours. Deep snow drifts and dangerously low wind chills often accompany blizzard conditions.

Wind Chill Warning - issued when wind chill temperatures (the combined effect of wind and temperature on exposed skin) are forecast to reach 20 degrees below zero or colder.

...PRECIPITATION TYPES...

...Freezing Rain....freezing rain is rain that falls and freezes to a cold surface such as a road or tree, causing a glaze of ice to form. Freezing rain forms when rain falls through a warm layer above the ground then freezes upon reaching the ground when the surface air and ground-level objects are below freezing. Freezing rain or "ice storms" can bring down trees and power lines, and severely hamper travel. The ice storm in December of 2002 crippled central North Carolina leaving some areas without power for a week.

...Sleet....sleet is melted snow that has re-frozen into ice pellets prior to reaching the ground. Sleet forms in a similar manner to freezing rain. However, the layer of cold air near the ground is thick enough to allow the rain drops to re-freeze before reaching the ground. Sleet will bounce when it strikes a hard surface. Sleet can accumulate like snow and make a road slick, but it is not as hazardous as freezing rain.

...Blizzard...a blizzard occurs when winds 35 mph or greater combine with blowing snow reducing visibility to less than one quarter mile causing white-out conditions. People caught in blizzards can quickly become disoriented from the cold, snow and wind, losing their way when only several yards from their home or car.

....Flurries....the term flurries refers to very light snow or snow that occurs for a short time period only causing a light dusting at best.

....Wind Chill....wind chill temperature is the "feel-like" temperature denoting the combined effect of wind and temperature on people and animals. Wind chill is based on the rate of heat loss from exposed skin. Wearing layers of clothing will help retain your body heat and combat wind chill. Once wind chill temperatures drop below -20 degrees f, exposed flesh can freeze in 30 minutes or less, causing frost bite.

Winter storms are deceptive killers because most deaths are indirectly related to the storm. Examples are traffic accidents due to icy roads...heart attacks while shoveling snow...fires and carbon monoxide poisoning. The advisories, watches and warnings issued by the national weather service are issued to help you prepare for upcoming winter weather and take appropriate action to protect yourself and your property.

Additional information on winter weather preparedness can be obtained on-line through the North Carolina Department of Emergency Management home page. The URL is:

<http://readync.org>

Up-to-date weather information is also available on-line from the following national weather service sites serving North Carolina (all URLs in lower case):

NWS RALEIGH NC- [HTTP://WEATHER.GOV/RAH](http://weather.gov/rah)
NWS WILMINGTON NC - [HTTP://WEATHER.GOV/ILM](http://weather.gov/ilm)
NWS NEWPORT/MOREHEAD CITY NC - [HTTP://WEATHER.GOV/MHX](http://weather.gov/mhx)
NWS WAKEFIELD VA - [HTTP://WEATHER.GOV/AKQ](http://weather.gov/akq)
NWS BLACKSBURG VA - [HTTP://WEATHER.GOV/RNK](http://weather.gov/rnk)
NWS GREENVILLE/SPARTANBURG SC - [HTTP://WEATHER.GOV/GSP](http://weather.gov/gsp)

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE WINTER WEATHER PREPAREDNESS HOME PAGE -
[HTTP://WWW.NWS.NOAA.GOV/OM/WINTER/INDEX.SHTML](http://www.nws.noaa.gov/om/winter/index.shtml)